

HOLY HELPS

Faith: Genuine or False?

Peter writes about *“The genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire.....”* (I Peter 1:7nkjv) The word “genuine” means “not counterfeit or artificial; real; true; sincere.”

Faith is only as good as the object in which it is placed. Jesus said to the disciples, *“Have faith in God.”* (Mark 11:22) Real faith is faith in the God of the Word and faith in the Word of God. *“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* (Rom. 10:17) “Faith is not a sense, nor sight, nor reason, but simply taking God at His word.” (Christmas Evans) Genuine faith, then, is confidence, dependence and obedience: confidence in God and His Word; dependence upon God and His Word and obedience to God as His will is revealed in His Word.

Scriptures speak of:

- no faith – Mark 4:40
- dead faith – James 2:17,20
- little faith – Matt. 6:30
- weak faith – Rom. 14:1
- growing faith – 2 Thess. 1:3
- sincere faith – I Tim. 1:5
- sound faith – Titus 1:13
- full of faith – Acts 6:5,8
- great faith – Matt. 8:10

False Faith

A dead faith is no faith and is false. There is much false faith abroad today. Those who depend upon religion for salvation have false faith. If the object of what is called “faith” for salvation is other than the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, that “faith” is false. There were those who followed Jesus, when He was on the earth, for reasons other than that He was who He claimed to be, that is, the Son of God and Savior of the world. Jesus said so Himself: *“I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.”* (John 6:26) These were “food followers” - false faith followers.

Genuine faith has its opposite which is counterfeit faith. Not all who say they have faith are genuine faith-followers of the Lord Jesus. Many are living with a deluded mindset regarding faith. A false faith is in reality not biblical faith. False faith is nothing more than wishful thinking. It is not confidence placed trustingly in God and His Word. Therefore, the life of such a one is devoid of any evidence of *“Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (Acts 20:21)

Frail Faith

We must be careful to make the distinction between a weak faith and a false faith, the two are vastly different. Paul says that we should *“Receive one who is weak in the faith.”* (Rom. 14:1) One who is a new believer and is yet spiritually immature may be weak in faith. At least, they have faith! It is real faith and must grow.

The disciples said to Jesus, *“Increase our faith.”* (Luke 17:5) Did Jesus increase their faith? No! However, He told them how to increase their own faith. His very next words after their request were, *“If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.”* (Luke 17:6) One way to increase one’s faith is to use the faith one has!

We are admonished to grow from *“faith to faith.”* (Rom. 1:17) That is, from one degree of faith to a greater degree of faith. Paul commended the Christians in the church in Thessalonica saying, *“Your faith grows exceedingly.”* (II Thess. 1:3) A frail faith is not a false faith. It is true faith in an embryonic stage that needs to grow. Frail faith needs to feed upon the Word of God and be exercised by obedience to the Word.

Failed Faith

There is not only false faith and frail faith, but there is failed faith. Sometimes a failed faith is mistaken for false faith. Jesus said to Peter, *“I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail.”* (Luke 22:32) That statement implies that a faith failure is a possibility. However, a faith failure need not be final and fatal. One must possess real faith in order to have a faith failure. Every true believer experiences a faith failure to some degree at some time in life when faith is being tested. But remember, you have to have faith for it to fail! Those who have a false faith never experience a faith failure for they do not have genuine biblical faith in the first place!

True faith will be tested and, like gold refined in fire, will prove to be genuine. Whatever degree of faith we have, it will be tested. A faith that will not stand the test is not genuine but false. Like the nation of Israel, God allows us to walk through some wilderness experiences in order to test the genuineness of our faith. If your faith is being tested, praise the Lord, for you have genuine faith which is *“much more precious than gold”!*

“O for a faith that will not complain
Beneath the chastening rod,
But in the hour of grief or pain
Will lean upon its God.”

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